Apart from the above, Government have allowed M/s. Utkal Alumina International (Pvt.) Ltd. and M/s. Larsen & Toubro to set up 100% export oriented units (EOU) alumina plants of one million tonne capacity each in orissa.

(c) and (d) Does not arise in view of reply to part (a) above.

Modernisation of IISCO

2253. SHRI C. O. POULOSE:
SHRI JIBON ROY:

Will the Minister of STEEL AND MINES be pleased to state:

(a) whether the five Central Trade Unions have submitted a joint memorandum to the Minister for Steel and Mines on the question of modernization of IISCO;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) the steps taken by Government on the points raised in the Memorandum?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF STEEL AND MINES (SHRI RAMESH BAIS): (a) and (b) Yes, Sir. The five Central Trade Unions have submitted a joint memorandum to the Minister for Steel and Mines inter-alia requesting that IISCO as a whole should be modernised within the public sector framework preferably by SAIL in the overall interest of the industry and country.

(c) A proposal for modernisation of IISCO through SAIL, by utilisation of funds from the Steel Development Fund (SDF) is under consideration of the Government.

As IISCO has been referred to the BIFR, any scheme to be taken up for modernisation will have to be in accordance with the orders of the BIFR in this regard.

Restructuring of IISCO at Burnpur

2254. SHRI ASHOK MITRA: Will the Minister of STEEL AND MINES be pleased to state:

(a) whether the restructuring of the Indian Iron and Steel Company at Burnpur continues to be on the active agenda of Government;

(b) whether the Steel Authority of India Limited has recently submitted a proposal in this regard involving a funding of approximately Rs. 1,200 crores by Government; and

(c) given the long time already taken for reaching a decision in the matter; would Government be prepared to offer its views on the latest proposal by July 31, 1998?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF STEEL AND MINES (SHRI RAMESH BAIS): (a) and (c) Indian Iron & Steel Company Limited (IISCO) was referred to BIFR in June 1994. Various schemes/proposals for revival and modernisation of IISCO were considered but could not be finalised due mainly to fund constraints. A proposal for modernisation of IISCO by utilisation of funds from the Steel Development Fund (SDF) is under consideration of the Government.

As IISCO has been referred to the BIFR, any scheme to be taken up for modernisation will have to be in accordance with the orders of the BIFR in this regard.

(b) No, Sir.

Gold Mines in Orissa

2255. SHRI RAHASBIHARI BARIK: Will the Minister of STEEL AND MINES be pleased to state:

(a) the number of gold mines in the country;

(b) whether Government have found gold reserve areas in the country particularly in Orissa;

(c) if so, the steps taken for the extraction of gold in the new gold reserved areas in Orissa; and

(d) the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF STEEL AND MINES (SHRI RAMESH BAIS): (a) The number of operating gold mines in the country during 1997-98 were seven.

(b) Gold reserves have been found in Karnataka, Rajasthan, Andhra Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra and Kerala. In Orissa only occurrences of gold have been found.

(c) and (d) Do not arise.

Sukhinda Chrome-ore Mines to Private Companies

2256. SHRI GHUFRAN AZAM: Will the Minister of STEEL AND MINES be pleased to state:

(a) whether the attention of government has been drawn to the press news-item captioned "pressure to clear Sukhinda lease" as reported in the Statesman dated the 16th April, 1998;

(b) if so, whether the private sector comapnies which propose to take over Sukhinda Chrome-ore mines have been pressing Government to hand over the mines to them; and

(c) if so, what is Government's latest view in this regard and steps taken to cancel lease of such mines in favour of private companies?

THE MINISTER OF STEEL AND MINES (SHRI NAVEEN PATNAIK): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) and (c) As per provision of the Mines and Minerals (Regulation and Development) Act, 1957, mining lease can be granted to an Indian national or a Company as defined in sub-section (1) of Section 3 of Companies Act, 1956 by the concerned State Government. However, for a mineral listed in the First Schedule of the aforesaid Act, prior approval of the Central Government is required before grant of the mining lease by the concerned State Government. In accordance with these provisions, some Companies have been requesting the State Government of Orissa to grant them mining lease for Chrome Ore in Sukhinda Valley.

The State Govt. of Orissa had sent a proposal dated 24th June, 1997 to the Ministry of Mines seeking approval for the grant of mining lease for chrome ore in Sukhinda Valley of Orissa over 50% of the balance area of 855.476 hectare which had become available for grant after the second renewal of the mining lease of TISCO for a reduced area, in favour of four parties, i.e. M/s. Indian Metal and Ferro Alloys (IMFA)Indian Charge Chrome Ltd. (ICCL), M/s. Ispat Alloys, Ms. Ferro Alloys Corporation Limited (FACOR) and M/s. Jindal Strips. The proposal was for grant of only 50% of the area of 855.476 ha. whereas the Central Govenrment's Order dated 17th August, 1995 had requested the State Govt. to send the proposal for grant of mining lease in favour of the aforesaid four parties for the total area of 855.476 hectares.

While the aforesaid proposal of the State Govt. dated 24th June, 1997 was under examination, Shri M.C. Mahapatra, the then Joint Secretary in this Ministry who was handling the matter, died on 27th September, 1997, allegedly as a result of jumping from the office building of Shastri Bhawan. The police took up the investigations of the circumstances relating to the death of Shri Mahapatra. Initially, the matter was being investigated by the Delhi Police and subsequently by the Crime Branch of the Delhi Police. Later on, the investigations were entrusted to the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) by the Ministry of Home Affairs. The entire original record in respect of the proposal for grant of mining lease of Sukinda Chrome Ore mines have been taken over by the CBI and any further action in the matter regarding consideration of the aforesaid proposal for grant of mining lease can be